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Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
Eleventh session
New York, 20-31 January 1992
Agenda item 7

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL AND OTHER MATTERS

A. States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

1. On 31 January 1992, the closing date of the eleventh session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, there were 111 States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979 and opened for signature, ratification and accession in New York on 1 March 1980. In accordance with article 27, the Convention entered into force on 3 September 1981.

2. A list of States parties to the Convention is contained in annex I to the present report.

B. Session

3. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women held its eleventh session from 20 to 31 January 1992 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The Committee held ... (189th to ...) meetings.

4. The eleventh session of the Committee was opened by the Chairperson of the Committee elected at the tenth session, Mervat Tallawy (Egypt), who welcomed the members.

5. In her opening statement on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna, in highlighting some areas where the work of the Committee and the Commission on the Status of Women converge, stated that one of the effects of the changes being witnessed at the global level was the trend to democratization. Increasing attention was being paid not only to the existence of rights, but to their exercise. The major focus was on rights de facto, in addition to rights de jure. Since the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as well as the Commission on the Status of Women, were concerned primarily with the effective implementation of rights, they both played key roles in that greater trend. She said that in examining the reports of States parties, the Committee had always shown that it was concerned with the implementation in practice of the rights contained in the Convention, and not only with their formal existence.

6. On the subject of violence against women, the Director stated that the Division had prepared an analytical report based on information contained in States parties' reports for the Committee's discussion of article 6 and of other articles related to violence against women and the sexual harassment and exploitation of women. Furthermore, the Committee would have before it the report of an expert group meeting convened on the issue in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/18 from 11 to 15 November 1991 in Vienna. The meeting was attended by experts representing all regions and including representatives of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and the Committee on Crime Prevention and Control. The experts recommended various strategies and approaches to eradicate violence against women. Among them was a draft declaration on violence against women, which also contained a definition of violence, submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women and the General Assembly. Any comments the Committee might wish to make would also be transmitted to the Commission. Other areas where the work of the Committee and of the Commission merged, were legal literacy, and political participation.

7. The Director went on to inform the Committee that since its last session, seven States, namely Burundi, Central African Republic, Estonia, Israel, Malta, Nepal, and the Netherlands had become parties to the Convention, bringing the total number of ratifications or accessions to 111. In reviewing the status of reports, she indicated that, starting in the current year, the Division would be able to avail itself of the services of an interregional advisor. One of her major tasks should be to assist States parties, upon their request, in the preparation of reports. The Committee currently had a backlog of 27 reports awaiting consideration. It might therefore wish to consider requesting additional meeting time from the General Assembly in order to avoid any undue delays between the submission of reports and their consideration by the Committee. She also informed the Committee that in accordance with a resolution adopted by the Third Committee on the rationalization of its work, in the future the reports of the Committee would be given in-depth consideration every other year, starting from 1992.

8. Concerning the innovations in the working methods of the Committee, the Director pointed out that the Secretariat had prepared for the first time detailed analyses for considering States parties' reports, including additional statistics available from United Nations sources, by the Committee. She pointed out that such work was done uniquely by the Secretariat of CEDAW. Pre-session documentation prepared by the Secretariat was available for the first time for general distribution. The documents covered violence, the informal sector, and women and development assistance. Finally, information presented by specialized agencies is also made available in a document of general distribution.

9. Lastly, the Director highlighted the very limited resources of the Division for the Advancement of Women. In order to prepare the current session of the Committee, other work, in particular the preparations for the World Conference on Women, had to be delayed. Given the current resource situation, the Secretariat would not be able to take on any additional tasks without adequate additional resources. She expressed her hope that the members of the Committee, as well as the States parties, would take that fact into account in their future decisions.

10. At the ... meeting, on ..., the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna addressed the Committee.

11. She noted that ...

C. Membership and attendance

12. All members of the Committee attended the eleventh session, except Ms. Kongit Sinegiorgis. Ms. ... attended the session from to , Ms. ... from to . The membership of the Committee is given in annex II to the present report.

D. Solemn declaration

13. At the opening of the eleventh session, before assuming her functions, Ms. Shangzhen Lin (People's Republic of China) who was elected at the fifth meeting of States parties to the Convention, made the solemn declaration as provided for under rule 10 of the rules of procedure of the Committee.

E. Officers of the Committee

14. In accordance with article 19 of the Convention, the Committee elects its officers for two years. Thus, the officers elected by the Committee at its tenth session will continue to hold office at the eleventh session: Mervat Tallawy (Egypt), Chairperson; Ana Maria Alfonsín de Fasán (Argentina), Ryoko Akamatsu (Japan) and Zagorka Ilic (Yugoslavia), Vice-Chairpersons; and Chryssanthi Laiou-Antoniou (Greece), Rapporteur.

F. Adoption of the agenda

15. The Committee considered the provisional agenda (CEDAW/C/1992/1) at its 189th meeting, on 20 January. The agenda was discussed and adopted as follows:

1. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.

2. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

3. Ways and means of implementing article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

4. Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

5. Contributions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to international conferences.

6. Provisional agenda for the twelfth session.

7. Adoption of the report.

G. Report of the pre-session working group

16. In accordance with the decision of the Committee at its eighth session, 1/ the Committee agreed that a pre-session working group should be convened before each regular session. Accordingly, the pre-session working group met in New York from 13 to 17 January 1992. The group consisted of five members as follows: Elizabeth Evatt (Chairperson), Emna Aouij, Ana Maria Alfonsín de Fasán, Zagorka Ilic, and Teresita Quintos-Deles.

17. At its 189th meeting, on 20 January, the Chairperson of the pre-session working group introduced the report of the pre-session working group (CEDAW/C/1992/CRP.2).

18. She said that the pre-session working group had been required to prepare lists of issues and questions relating to the second periodic reports of six countries: China, Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, El Salvador, Spain, Sri Lanka, and Venezuela. In preparing the lists, the pre-session working group had placed emphasis on the complex issues of equality and had considered that members of the Committee might wish to pose other relevant questions to the representatives of the States parties at the session. She pointed out that the pre-session working group, as requested by the Committee, reduced the number of questions and focused on more analytical and qualitative aspects, and underlined the achievements and remaining obstacles. She stated that the working group organized its comments and questions under each of the articles of the Convention, and decided to put issues relating to violence against

women under a separate heading, (following art. 5), with a reference to articles 2, 5, 11, 12 and 16, in accordance with the Committee's General Recommendation No. 12 (eighth session, 1989).

H. Organization of work

19. The Committee considered its organization of work at its 189th and meetings on 20 and January. The Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Organization of work (CEDAW/C/1992/CRP.1), prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the Chairperson of the Committee;

(b) Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on its tenth session; 2/

(c) General guidelines and general recommendations adopted by the Committee regarding the form and content of periodic reports;

(d) Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/25 entitled: "Elimination of discrimination against women in accordance with the aims of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women";

(e) Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/18 entitled "Violence against women in all its forms";

(f) Report of the pre-session working group (CEDAW/C/1992/CRP.2).

I. Composition of working groups

20. At its 189th meeting, on 20 January, the Committee agreed on the composition of its two standing working groups: Working Group I to consider and suggest ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee and Working Group II to consider ways and means of implementing article 21 of the Convention.

21. Working Group I was composed of the following members of the Committee:

Ana Maria Alfonsín de Fasán
Desirée P. Bernard
Dora Gladys Nancy Bravo Nuñez de Ramsey
Norma Forde
Zagorka Ilic
Shangzhen Lin
Tatiana Nikolaeva
Mervat Tallawy
Rose N. Ukeje

22. Working Group II was composed of the following members:

Charlotte Abaka
Ryoko Akamatsu
Emna Aouij
Carlota Bustelo García del Real
Ivanka Corti
Elizabeth Evatt
Shangzhen Lin
Grethe Fenger-Möller
Aida González Martínez
Chryssanthi Laiou-Antoniou
Edith Oeser
Teresita Quintos-Deles
Hanna Beate Schopp-Schilling
Kissem Walla-Tchangai

J. Mandates of Working Groups I and II

23. The Committee had before it the following proposed draft programme of work for Working Group I, as proposed by the Secretariat on the basis of deliberations of the Committee at its tenth session:

(a) Issues arising from the report of the pre-session Working Group (CEDAW/C/1992/CRP.2);

(b) Reports to be considered at the twelfth session of the Committee;

(c) Length of the twelfth session in 1993;

(d) Contribution of the Committee to the World Conference on Human Rights, 1993;

(e) Contribution of the Committee to the World Conference on Women, 1995;

(f) Contribution of the Committee to the International Year of the Family;

(g) Issues for the fourth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies;

(h) Amendment of the Committee's General Guidelines as to the form and contents of reports;

(i) General observations, summary conclusions or recommendations following the presentations by individual States parties;

(j) Programme of work for the next session;

(k) Draft provisional agenda for the twelfth session.

24. The Committee had before it the following draft programme of work for Working Group II, as proposed by the Secretariat on the basis of the deliberations of the Committee at its tenth session:

(a) Pending general recommendations: development aid and women's role in development; teacher training on equality issues; women workers in enterprises; the Committee agreed to give priority also to the broad theme of women in the informal sector;

(b) Article 6 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (and other articles related to violence towards women and the sexual harassment and exploitation of women).

25. The Committee discussed in plenary meeting the programme of work of the two working groups. It was suggested to add to Working Group I an item on preparatory documentation prepared by the Secretariat for the session of the Committee. It was stressed that in the light of the upcoming World Conferences (World Conference on Human Rights, 1993, and Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, 1995), the Committee would have to work on its timely contributions to those Conferences. Referring to the report of the expert group meeting on violence against women which was before the Committee, and in conjunction with the Committee's anticipated discussion of article 6, members proceeded to a preliminary consideration of the report.

26. One expert asked why the members of the Committee had not been informed about the expert group meeting. It was said that the report, although interesting, presented the Committee with a fait accompli, and she wondered what the Committee's task was now with regard to the report. She wanted to know if the report was going to be the basis for the deliberations of Working Group II. Another expert said that the Committee should give its opinion on the various options presented in the report of the experts. She considered it very important that the Committee express its opinion on the issue of strengthening of instruments. She also suggested that the Committee should make a recommendation to strengthen General Recommendation No. 12. She further asked if it was perhaps necessary to have two separate recommendations - one on violence, and one on article 6. She also stated that on the basis of Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/18, CEDAW was included in the expert group meeting. Experts voiced their concern over the risk of multiplication of efforts under way on the issue. It was stated that it was the role of the Secretariat to coordinate and to avoid duplication. The issue of violence was a serious matter, but one must proceed in an orderly way. The crucial point was implementation. Experts stated that the Committee should give its view on whether or not a new instrument should be developed, or whether a different approach should be favoured in addressing the problem. The question was which approach would most benefit women. Members underlined

the need to look into the substantive aspects of the issue of violence, and how the Committee could best contribute to the eradication of violence. It was stressed that the Committee should submit its comments to the Commission.

27. The Committee decided that the working groups should meet in closed meetings, in accordance with past practice. Both working groups are open to all members of the Committee. Specialized agencies, and other bodies which can make a substantive contribution to the items under consideration by the working group, may be invited by the working group to contribute to its deliberations.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/44/38), paras. 22-25.

2/ Ibid., Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/46/38).